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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0016

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 001439

SIPDIS

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EUR/PPD (ACERVETTI)
EUR/UBI (NNOLAN)
NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [KPAO](#) [KIRF](#) [EI](#)
SUBJECT: SUNNIS AND SHIAS ATTEND INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING
RECEPTION

REF: A. DUBLIN 1264

[B](#). DUBLIN 1216
[C](#). DUBLIN 1087

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES C. KENNY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

Summary

[1](#). (U) Summary. On November 22, the Ambassador hosted the Embassy's second annual interfaith Thanksgiving reception, in large part to promote Post's Muslim outreach program. The event was especially successful in bringing together key Shia and Sunni Muslim leaders, including among the Iraqi community in Ireland, promoting tolerance, and showing the unifying influence of religion and faith in the United States. End Summary.

Thanksgiving Reception

[2](#). (U) On November 22, the Ambassador hosted Post's second annual inter-faith Thanksgiving reception, an event designed to reach out mainly to the Muslim community in Ireland and to emphasize the unifying influence of religion in the United States. Prominent members from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities were among the approximately 120 guests. Muslims from the Sunni and Shia faiths attended, including approximately five Shia Iraqis and the director (a Sunni Iraqi from Mosul) of the Islamic Cultural Center of Ireland, the largest mosque in Ireland. Many NGO representatives and several GOI officials, such as human rights and humanitarian aid officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as three Secretaries General of the government also attended.

[3](#). (U) The event featured readings from the Koran, the Old Testament and the New Testament by participating clerics/cantors. The Ambassador also spoke about Thanksgiving as an American celebration of faith, family and unity. He said that generosity in response to major tragedies, such as the Pakistan earthquake, the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, made Thanksgiving this year a more poignant event. He also described religious faith in the United States as an anchor that helped to make communities stronger.

[4](#). (C) Comment: The theme of the American Thanksgiving holiday appeared to be effective in reaching out to the Muslim community. Muslim guests expressed surprise that America has set aside a day to give thanks; they also seemed

unfamiliar with the religious underpinnings of the holiday. According to several guests, the celebration established a measure of common ground that they did not know existed. Muslims who attended last year's reception evidently pressured other initially reluctant invitees to come this year. As a result, members of the Sunni Muslim community, who normally espouse anti-U.S. opinions and are reluctant to respond to embassy outreach, attended and commented positively on the celebration. The event was also an opportunity for GOI officials to learn more about USG outreach; several officials indicated an increased openness to include speakers representing American views at a GOI-sponsored Human Rights conference in June and other venues. End comment.

15. (U) Highlights of the event included the following:

--According to several guests, this was the only event in Ireland that enabled members of the government, various NGOs, and faith-based groups to meet and interact.

--The Shia Muslims, mostly Iraqi with very favorable views on USG involvement in Iraq, expressed shock at the attendance of the Imam and prominent leaders of the main Sunni Mosque, who are vocal in opposition to USG involvement in Iraq. They also said that the Sunni leaders who attended the event will now have to confront the radicals in their community and explain why they were associating with the American Embassy.

--Moderate Sunni Muslims expressed gratitude for this outreach and a determination to include embosffs in continued engagement with the community. They relayed a special interest in helping us to see through what they described as a facade of moderation in the community and into the extremist pressures under the surface.

--An Afghani attendee commented that he met more Muslims at this reception than he had in any previous Irish event.

16. (U) RTE, the local television channel, recorded highlights of the event as part of its "A Day in the Life of the American Ambassador" program to be aired on November 25. RTE filmed the Ambassador at other events, such as at a breakfast meeting discussing Northern Ireland, a country team meeting, a session with the Foreign Minister and other events. We expect the coverage, arranged by RTE journalist Geraldine Harney, sister of Deputy Prime Minister Mary Harney, to present a positive image of the United States.

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